CAPTAIN GEORGE'S
Penny Dreadful
TORONTO, SEPT. 21, 1979
NUMBER 552

SATURDAY

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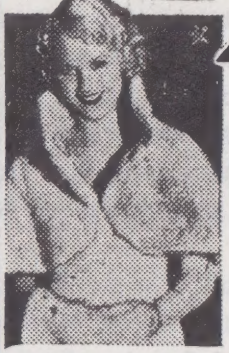
1933



14 FAMOUS STARS

INCLUDING

Warner Baxter
Bebe Daniels
George Brent
Ruby Keeler
Dick Powell
Una Merkel
Guy Kibbee

Gala MIDNITE PREVIEW FRIDAY at 11.15 p.m.

UPTOWN

TORONTO'S HOME of GREAT PICTURES

A WEEKLY REVIEW

DON MILLER

ANOTHER REPUBLIC SUMMER conclusion: Hate to do it, but for the last of the summer series it's necessary to put the rap on Republic. Well, nobody's perfect. But this question of Republic serial heroes came up--now, who comes to mind when you think of Republic serials? (Say "Mala" and I'll drop you where you stand!) Well, I immediately think of Ralph Byrd, Bob Livingston and Lee Powell. There are plenty others, like Herman Brix, Kane Richmond, Dick Purcell, Rod Cameron and more; but Byrd, Livingston and Powell represented the Republic serial in the plush years, and were associated with their characters--Dick Tracy, The Lone Ranger--as much as with their real and reel names. And in each case, the feeling persists that the studio overlooked some good bets, or otherwise failed to follow up properly on some potential boxoffice draws.

Take Byrd first. The initial Dick Tracy serial was his first major role, and while he actually didn't resemble the comic-strip character as created by Chester Gould, he so thoroughly became the supersleuth that, for years afterward, every time Byrd would appear, every kid in the audience would give out with: "Yay, it's Dick Tracy!" And Republic would call him back periodically for another Tracy serial, but would feed him castoffs in other respects --a one-shot Three Mesquiteers replacing Bob Livingston, an inferior non-Tracy serial, a simple-minded action B-yarn about truckers (in which they stuck him with some songs)--nothing to enhance or further the impression he had made. As it was, Byrd played Tracy for RKO as well as Republic, and on TV too. Couldn't get away from it.

With Livingston, maybe they tried too hard. For the personable performer was presented with anything and everything in the way of roles, commencing with some Zorro-type heroics in a serial, and then in a feature, The Bold Caballero, and in 1936 color to boot. By that time, Livingston was about to become established as one-third of The Three Mesquiteers Western trio. And as if that wasn't enough, he'd be getting leading parts in Republic action B-pics, as the hotshot reporter or crimefighter. By early 1939, no telling where on the Republic roster you'd find him, and as it happened he became The Lone Ranger for 15 chapters. Closely associated with Republic, Livingston would wander off elsewhere, only to return. His hair turned gray, and he was still doing leads in 1948 in things like Daredevils of the Clouds, and doing them well. But with more selective handling, he might have been perhaps not so busy, but possibly bigger.

Lee Powell was the first Lone Ranger and topped off his Republic career with The Fighting Devil Dogs. With a one-two punch like that, you'd expect

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CAPTAIN GEORGE'S PENNY DREADFUL, a weekly review established in 1968, is published by the Vast Whizzbang Organization at Memory Lane, 594 Markham Street, Toronto, Ontario, Canada.

P-D TOPICS

EDITOR'S NOTES: The Vast Whizzbang Organization is truly flattered to have received an invitation to attend this year's Newsletter Management Seminar being held next month in New York by the Newsletter Association of America in Washington, D. C. The seminar is in New York, the Association is in Washington, D. C. Okay? The Newsletter Management Seminar will be a one-day affair with a schedule as follows: 9:00 a. m.--How To Build Personal Wealth With Your Publishing Property; 10:30--Coffee and Danish Break; 10:45--Complete, Authoritative Answers To What The Newsletter Publisher Should Know About Accounting And Finance; 12:15--Cocktails and Lunch; 1:30--Management Strategies And Techniques For Growth, and so on.

According to a letter from Jim Marsh, Chairman, Seminar Development Committee, speakers and panelists "will give you the combined benefit of years of successful, practical newsletter experience in several vital areas to help you turn your newsletter into a valuable property now and your passport to financial independence tomorrow. You'll discover why some newsletters are veritable goldmines, while others with seemingly comparable staffs and customers just struggle along..."

Well, gee, we're not sure exactly how to put this, Mr. Marsh, but I don't know whether you'd really want us at your Newsletter Management Seminar in New York City. One of your speakers would just get rolling on an intricate and detailed dissertation on Newsletter Management Strategies And Techniques For Growth, and in we'd stumble, wearing a Republic Pictures T-shirt covered with Danish crumbs, clutching an armload of old pulps and comic books, and anxiously asking where the dealers' tables are and what time the 2,345th showing of the Star Trek blooper reel starts. No, we don't think the Newsletter Management Seminar is the place for us, thanks just the same. And we don't want you to get the idea that the $150 Registration Fee ($250 for non-members) for your one-day Newsletter Management Seminar in New York City has influenced our decision in any way whatso- or howsoever. No sir!! It's just that we have an opportunity to spend our Registration Fee money on some rare old PRC lobby cards, and we think your experts and panelists would agree that the first step toward financial independence and that Newsletter Goldmine In The Sky is the acquisition of valuable inventory. --P. H.

DON MILLER continued

the legal department to rush over a brand-new contract, and the publicity boys on hand to put in some overtime in playing up the new action star. Something went wrong somewhere, and Powell wound up at Grand National in a series of imitation Mesquiteer Westerns...a series of one flick. You could see him in a Flash Gordon serial at Universal, provided you didn't blink. Later on he appeared in a PRC Western series, not even top billed, joined the Marines in World War II and was killed. Why Republic dropped him remains a mystery.

PETE HARRIS

THE ART OF SPYING III: The year 1903 is not one which readily springs to mind like, say, 1914, 1929, 1939 or 1941, but it is memorable for such milestones as the Wright brothers' first powered flight at Kittyhawk, the movie The Great Train Robbery, and the first rendition of the song Sweet Adeline. Jack London's The Call of the Wild and Kate Douglas Wiggins' Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm were first published that year, as was Erskine Childers' influential spy novel, The Riddle of the Sands. Fortunately, Penguin Books has seen fit to print a new paperback edition of Childers' book so that, 76 years after the fact, fans of espionage stories are able to read for themselves the almost legendary novel which obviously inspired John Buchan's The 39 Steps, which in turn inspired a new generation of writers including Eric Ambler and Geoffrey Household (who wrote the foreword for this latest edition).

As well as being an interesting if somewhat primitive look at spying, The Riddle of the Sands is an absorbing and detailed look at yachting--no, not the Sunday afternoon sort of yachting with its sparkling brass, spanking white sails and natty attire, but rather life-or-death sailing in the Baltic, through the Kiel Canal and into the treacherous waters around the German Frisian Islands in the North Sea. It is, in passing, also a first-rate travel book with some tantalizing glimpses of a long-ago and long-lost time and place.

The story is told in the first person by one Carruthers, a British Foreign Office junior official who, while hard at work in London in September, receives an invitation to join an acquaintance named Davies on a yacht in the Baltic. Carruthers, a somewhat callow young man with a taste for the social whirl, accepts out of a sense of self-pity at having been forced by official duties to miss the season's country house parties. He is appalled to find that Davies' yacht, the Dulcibella, is a primitive but sturdy craft built for endurance and not the comfort of social-climbing young swells. He reluctantly stays with Davies and the Dulcibella and finds himself becoming more and more involved in murky doings on and off the German coast. The Riddle of the Sands is not easy to begin reading nor to stay with, but it has a way of growing on you after a chapter or two.

The facts of Erskine Childers' life are themselves worthy of a novel. Born in 1870, the son of Anglo-Irish parents, he spent 15 years, from 1895 to 1910, as a clerk of the House of Commons, with time out for service with the Royal Artillery in the Boer War. An avid sailor, he spent his vacations aboard a tiny yacht in the North Sea and English Channel, and wrote The Riddle of the Sands primarily to alert Britain to the need for a North Sea fleet and naval base, and for a strong naval reserve. He took up the cause of Irish home rule around 1910 and, after service in World War I in the Royal Naval Air Service, settled in Ireland to work for complete independence. When the Irish Free State was established, he joined the IRA, was captured by Free State soldiers, court-martialed and, on Nov. 24, 1922, executed by firing squad in Dublin.